

Amoris

Let's talk Family! Let's be Family!

PARISH PROGRAMME



FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

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FOREWORD

In his apostolic exhortation *The Joy of Love*, Pope Francis expresses his hope that families and those involved in supporting families will study his document carefully and patiently. This *Amoris: Let's Talk Family! Let's Be Family!* programme is an initiative to promote and resource this study in preparation for the World Meeting of Families in Dublin in August 2018. It has a number of elements:

- *The Joy of Love: Six-Session Parish Conversation* is a parish-based programme that explores key messages in *The Joy of Love* in an accessible and practical way.
- *Practical Initiatives for Popular Moments* offers a menu of activities that tie in with popular family moments to communicate key messages from *The Joy of Love*.
- A range of online resources will appear during the course of the year, including animations on *The Joy of Love* for both adults and children, as well as studio discussions and interviews.
- *A Facilitator's Guide* is also available to train local volunteers in delivering the *Amoris* programme.

All of these resources are available online at www.amoris.ie or www.worldmeeting2018.ie. While focusing especially on *The Joy of Love*, the *Amoris* programme also draws on two other key documents in Pope Francis' ministry: *Praise Be (On the Care of our Common Home)* and *The Joy of the Gospel*.

This *Amoris* programme seeks to fulfil some of the aims of *Share the Good News: The National Directory for Catechesis in Ireland*. The directory sees that 'the parish community is the focal point of faith development in all its forms' (130). The directory also sees the importance of a multi-

media approach to faith development with adults. 'Information technology and other new and varied methods of communication should also be utilised. For adults, with a premium on their time, distance learning can be helpful' (75).

The facilitator's guide offers a practical means of calling and forming laypeople in the parish to take co-responsibility for the development and implementation of local faith development initiatives. The directory is clear on this. 'Collaborative teamwork is to be chosen decisively and encouraged wholeheartedly' (87). Here it quotes Pope Benedict XVI: 'It is precisely your task, dear parish priests, to nurture the spiritual and apostolic growth of those who are already committed to working hard in the parishes. They form the core of the community that will act as a leaven for the others.'

The directory also acknowledges the need for a gradual and differentiated approach to adult faith development in parishes. 'For some adults, introductory material may be sufficient, while others may be interested in deeper theological discussion' (74). In that spirit, the *Amoris* programme includes a menu of initiatives, from one-off parish activities at popular family events through to a programme of conversation on *The Joy of Love*. This menu seeks to engage as many people as possible in faith development at a level they are comfortable with, and then invites them into further reflection and conversation on the Good News of Jesus Christ.

The World Meeting of Families and its preparatory catechesis offer dioceses and parishes an opportunity to progress their faith development work in a way that has potential to connect with the popular imagination in a manner that sustains beyond the event itself.

CONTENTS

911

AUTUMN TRAINING SESSION

Pope Francis: Ten Values at the Heart of His Ministry	14
Overview of the <i>Let's Talk Family! Let's Be Family!</i> Programme	18
Planning Skills for <i>Let's Talk Family! Let's Be Family!</i>	20

SPRING TRAINING SESSION

Review of Experience	23
Overview of <i>The Joy of Love</i>	23
Facilitating <i>The Joy of Love: Six-Session Parish Conversation</i>	29





Official Family Prayer for World Meeting of Families 2018

God, our Father,
We are brothers and sisters in Jesus your Son,
One family, in the Spirit of your love.

Bless us with the joy of love.

Make us patient and kind,
gentle and generous,
welcoming to those in need.
Help us to live your forgiveness and peace.

Protect all families with your loving care,
Especially those for whom we now pray:

*(We pause and remember family members
and others by name.)*

Increase our faith,
Strengthen our hope,
Keep us safe in your love,
Make us always grateful for the gift of life that we share.

This we ask, through Christ our Lord, Amen.

Mary, mother and guide, pray for us.
Saint Joseph, father and protector, pray for us.
Saints Joachim and Anne, pray for us.
Saints Louis and Zélie Martin, pray for us.





LET'S TALK FAMILY! LET'S BE FAMILY!



Guide for Local Facilitators

Introduction for those Organising the Training of Local Facilitators

The purpose of this guide is to support diocesan delegates and their teams in equipping volunteers at parish level (or in groups of parishes) to organise elements of the *Let's Talk Family! Let's Be Family!* programme. The format of this guide accommodates two training sessions for the volunteers of approximately two-and-a-half hours each, one in the autumn and one in the spring. Each parish can judge for itself which resources it wants to avail of and when and how

to work with them. In light of the feedback from our consultations there is a clear preference in most areas for the following approach:

- Start with some options from *Practical Initiatives for Popular Moments*
- Plan the *The Joy of Love: Six-Session Parish Conversation* as a follow-on option for Lent/Easter

Autumn Training Session Outline

The autumn session covers three topics. These are:

- an overview of what Pope Francis says about faith and the world
- an introduction to the *Let's Talk Family! Let's Be Family!* resources
- an introduction to a method of planning for the *Let's Talk Family! Let's Be Family!* activities

This training session includes:

- inputs on these topics available in text (📄) and on video (📺)
- guides for reflection on these inputs in text (💭) and on video (📺)
- small group discussions with questions provided (💬)

You can give your own inputs, drawing as much as you wish on the texts that follow, or you can use the video inputs. Likewise you can offer the guided reflections, again using the reflection texts, or you can use the video reflections.





Video Clips

There are eleven short video clips available for the autumn session:

- Clip 1** Overview of task of local facilitators
- Clip 2** Five points from Pope Francis
- Clip 3** First guide for reflection
- Clip 4** Five more points on Pope Francis' vision
- Clip 5** Second guide for reflection
- Clip 6** Overview of *Let's Be Family! Let's Talk Family!* resources
- Clip 7** Third guide for reflection
- Clip 8** Pope Francis on how we ought to engage with people
- Clip 9** Fourth guide for reflection
- Clip 10** Introduction to a method of group planning
- Clip 11** Fifth (closing) guide for reflection

Spring Training Session Outline

The spring training follows a similar pattern. It covers three topics:

- An opportunity for the parish volunteers to review their activities since their autumn training
- An introduction to Pope Francis' document, *The Joy of Love*
- An introduction to facilitating *The Joy of Love: Six-Session Parish Conversation* programme

The format is the same as the autumn training, with inputs available in text and on video, guides for reflection in both formats, and small group discussion.



Video Clips

There are six video clips available for the spring session:

- Clip 12** Overview of *The Joy of Love* (Part 1)
- Clip 13** Overview of *The Joy of Love* (Part 2)
- Clip 14** Sixth guide for reflection
- Clip 15** Input on facilitating a *Joy of Love* conversation session
- Clip 11** Closing guide reflection (repeat of above)

Each team using the programme can draw on and utilise the materials to suit local circumstances.



AUTUMN TRAINING SESSION

Welcome, opening prayer and overview of task for local facilitators (10 min)

On Preparation for the World Meeting of Families 2018

Pope Francis has asked us in our parishes to promote conversations about his document, *The Joy of Love*. And of course at the core of this is the Good News of God's love, which provides the basis for what he says about love and family. There are two concrete ways we are inviting you to respond to Pope Francis' request:

1. *Practical Initiatives for Popular Moments* is a menu of activities that take place in the church, the community and the family home. A full list and description of these is available both online and in hard copy. Have a look at these and see if there are some that a small group could promote in your parish.
2. *The Joy of Love: Six-Session Parish*

Conversation is a six-session discussion programme. The text of this is available online from 21 August and in hard copy from early September. The video inserts will be available from December 2017 in time for running this part of the programme in the spring. We are asking you to consider running the programme in your parish. It may work best as a lenten programme in 2018. Online resources are also available. These include cartoon animations, a studio version of *The Joy of Love* which can be viewed in the home, and some back-up resources for *Practical Initiatives for Popular Moments*. We are asking you to become familiar with these online resources and promote them in your parish.





Pope Francis: Ten Values at the Heart of His Ministry

- Introduction and first five points (5 mins)
- Guide for reflection (5 min)
- Completion of the ten points (5 min)
- Guide for reflection (5 min)
- Group discussion (30 min)

Introduction (5 min)



Pope Francis' *The Joy of Love* offers his reflection on family life. This sits within a broader understanding of the reality of the world today and the relevance of our Christian faith. While Pope Francis highlights things that are wrong in the world, he is not doing so merely to complain. He focuses on the relevance of our Good News of the Gospel for the world, and the need to communicate that Good News. He also highlights things that are wrong in the world, not to complain, but to encourage us to try to change the world for the better. As Cardinal Farrell said:

If we are just going to criticise, I fear that the Lord is going to repeat to us what he said in the Gospel about Martha and Mary. You've been worried about many things, but only one thing was important and you didn't do it. So that's why I believe this is so important for us. Stop all the criticism, and focus on the positive, focus on faith.

So we start by looking at key elements in Pope Francis' vision of faith and the world today.





1. **All things are connected** – Pope Francis highlights that creation is a single unified whole. All things hold together. Bringing God's love to bear lifts everything. A distortion of that love distorts everything in turn – our own inner lives, our family life, the lives of whole populations across the planet, and the well-being of our planet itself. There is an 'inseparable bond between concern for nature, justice for the poor, commitment to society and interior peace' (*Laudato Si'*, 10).
2. **Joy** – Our Christian joy is rooted in the truth of our faith that God exists and that God is love. It is Jesus who reveals this joy of love most clearly, 'I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete' (John 15:11). This truth affects everything.
3. **Compassion** – In his life, Pope Francis has seen first-hand how this truth that God is love is often denied. In so many ways our world is organised as if God does not exist, as if our human dignity is of no account. Pope Francis sees so much human suffering, and in that suffering he hears the voice of God calling to our world to change – to become fair, just, to show respect for our planet and for each person.
4. **Hope** – God is at work among us. Even though there is great suffering and inequality in the world God is active in building a society of love. Our task is to cooperate with this activity wherever we find it. So while Pope Francis is deeply upset by the injustices that he sees, he does not despair. He believes that whatever issues we are tackling, God is already there at work before us.
5. **Calm** – Our challenge is to see the traces of God's spirit working in the world and to follow those traces. This means we need to develop in ourselves a spirit of calm and prayer rooted in hope – so that in the midst of the challenges and difficulties of our world we never lose our sense of the presence of God.





Guide for reflection (5 min)

To spot the traces of God's Spirit working in the world we need to listen carefully. This takes time, and moments of quiet and reflection – a spirit of calm and prayer rooted in hope. We take some time now to enter that space. We become aware of God's presence with us, the God of joy and compassion and hope. We make space inside ourselves for listening. We notice our feelings, our inner response to what we have heard. What did I like? What did I not like? Can I name what I am hoping for?



6. **Urgency** – This calm says not to panic, but it does not say that we can leave things as they are. Pope Francis has a deep sense of urgency. He compares the Church to a field hospital in a battlefield. There are many deep wounds that people are suffering. The Gospel is absolutely relevant and important for healing these wounds. And, as in any field hospital, we have to make priorities – some wounds are more urgent.
7. **New ways of doing things** – While the core Gospel message is always the same, as followers of Jesus we have to be creative and courageous about how we share that message. Pope Francis says we are not mummies in a museum. We have a mission and we need to be out on the streets with it, finding ways that connect us and the Good News with the lives of families.
8. **We are fragile** – Side by side with the truth that we are called by God to live lives of love, there is another truth. We fall short so often. We don't live up to our best selves. Pope Francis holds both these together in another truth – God's most basic way of showing love is through mercy. Mercy is a bending of the heart, a heartfelt gesture of solidarity, compassion and consolation, towards any person or creature in need, including ourselves, regardless of whether that need is our own fault or not. The opposite of mercy is heartlessness.



9. We grow with time – Pope Francis speaks about time being more important than space. This means we always have an ‘under construction’ sign hanging over our lives. As human beings we are ‘works in progress’ until the moment we die. There is always a tension between the invitation of Jesus to live the Gospel more fully and the reality of our lives right now. But the gap between these two ‘spaces’ is less important than our trusting that God will bridge this gap, over time, if we cooperate with his grace.

10. Stay in touch with reality – Here is another core conviction of Pope Francis: reality is more important than ideas. God is present in the reality of the world and in people’s lives. Our ideas need to stay in touch with reality. This is the basis of discernment – where we seek to discover God’s presence and God’s call in the midst of our reality. Pope Francis has a deep respect for the capacity of each person, in the sacred space of our conscience, to enter into conversation with God about our lives and to come to an informed decision on what is best to do.



Guide for reflection (5 min)

We take time again to be calm and quiet within ourselves, to hear where we really are with what we have heard. Did I hear anything that surprised me? Did anything make me uneasy? What have I heard that makes me hopeful or joyful or glad? What images or phrases stand out for me? As we move into a time of discussion, what do we need that will help us to speak and to listen carefully and respectfully to each other? We ask the Lord for that.



Small group discussion and open forum (30 min)

Where do we see these ten values of Pope Francis in practice already in our parish? What are we being invited to do or are we being invited to think differently?





Overview of the *Let's Talk Family!* *Let's Be Family!* Programme



Let's Talk Family! Let's Be Family!

- a. Show video clip six or use the following notes (10 min)



Practical Initiatives for Popular Moments

The basic idea behind this material is to provide a menu of practical activities that, in one way or another, celebrates family: a Baptism gift; a gift for married couples; a memorial event for November; distribution of an icon at the Christmas Mass; a St Valentine's Day initiative; activities for First Communion, Confirmation and others. These are intended to provide a practical opportunity during popular moments in family and Church life for people to hear and experience some messages from *The Joy of Love*.

A list of possible options, and a description of how you can promote them in your parish is included in *Practical Initiatives for Popular Moments*. Your task will be to select from the menu what you think would be feasible for your parish and plan accordingly. A practical approach to planning is included below.

The Joy of Love: Six-Session Parish Conversation

This is a six-session programme. Its aim is to reflect on *The Joy of Love*, the document Pope Francis prepared after the two synods on the family and a worldwide consultation which took place before these synods. Session topics are as follows:

- The Reality of Family Life Today
- The Christian Vision for the Family
- God's Dream for Love
- Married Love Growing to Maturity
- God's Mercy – No One Excluded
- A Gospel of Hope for Families



The format for each night is the same:

- Our personal experience of the topic (video piece and discussion)
- How Pope Francis sees the topic (video piece and discussion)
- Prayer and refreshments

It is your decision whether or not to run this programme. If you decide to go ahead, then you will need to identify when, where and for whom. The programme includes a step-by-step outline for each session, and the supporting video inputs. Your task for each session will be to provide an opportunity for a respectful conversation about the content of *The Joy of Love*.



Guide for reflection (5 min)

So we have seen the range of options for our parishes. The challenge is to hold the tension between 'rooted in reality' and hope, so that we are not on the one hand unrealistically ambitious, or, on the other hand, held back by pessimism and fear.

Bring to mind people in your parish. Think of those who are not involved in parish life as well. Think especially of those who you would love to inspire with the Gospel of God's love. Hold them up before God. Say their names. What do you hope for? Tell God. What are you fearful about? Tell God.



Small group discussion and open forum (30 min)

Can you share what was going on for you during the reflection? Do you have a sense of what you think we could do back in our parish?





Planning Skills for *Let's Talk Family!* *Let's Be Family!*



How we engage with people (5 min)

In his *Joy of the Gospel* Pope Francis makes a number of points about how we engage with people in the work of sharing the Good News.

- **Listen to people** – We can't share Good News for people's lives if we haven't listened to them first. We need to be able to hold respectful conversations where people feel heard and have their story understood.
- **Actions speak louder** – How we treat people is a powerful communication. Welcome, respect, care – all communicate the essence of the Good News before we speak a word. Both these points are very important in how we prepare for and run any parish activity.
- **Use language and symbols that people understand and find attractive** – When we do speak it needs to be in a manner to which people can relate.
- **Build on popular religious moments** – A lot of the *Let's Talk Family! Let's Be Family!* activities tap into popular religious moments in families – Baptism, Christmas, Confirmation and so on. These present opportunities for connecting with a wider range of people and for bringing some of the insights from *The Joy of Love* to those moments.



Guide for reflection (3 min)

What resonated? Where do you disagree or feel resistance?



How a group can plan together

This may be especially of use in planning *Practical Initiatives for Popular Moments*.

Let's take the example of the gift token action for St Valentine's Day. The gift tokens themselves will have been distributed to each parish in the autumn. The promotional leaflet for the gift tokens – 'Thinking Outside the Chocolate Box' – is available to be downloaded from the WMOF website. Short notices for bulletins, announcements, etc. are also available from the website.



Sample planning page for St Valentine's Day action

Here is an example of how you might plan that action in eight steps.

(But change the steps and deadlines as you see fit)

Action steps	Person responsible for making sure this step happens	Deadline
Step A A planning meeting to outline all the remaining steps and to fill in the planning form		10 November
Step B If you don't have a sufficient number of gift tokens contact the WMOF office to order more		17 November
Step C Get permission as required from shops and other venues to locate your tokens		30 November
Step D Download the notices for bulletins, Mass announcements and local media		12 January
Step E Download and make the required number of copies of the promotional leaflet		12 January
Step F Put your St Valentine's gift tokens in the agreed locations – church, shops, etc.		19 January
Step G Launch your promotional campaign – distributing leaflets, church announcements, media, etc.		26 January
Step H A review meeting to look at how the action went		23 February



This approach to planning is often used in community settings for the following reasons:

- It includes each member in the development of the plan of action – valuing and acknowledging their contribution
- It shows the part each person has to play in the delivery of the action
- It starts at the end, identifying the action that will be delivered and by when
- It then works backways, identifying the key steps that have to be taken and by when in order for that action to happen
- It identifies who has responsibility for each step
- It summarises the whole plan in a single, simple image as given in the example here
- Everybody gets a copy of the summary and it is then used for reviewing step-by-step progress towards the action

Small group discussion and open forum (20 min)

What struck me about the input on engaging with people?

What struck me about the planning model?



Guide for closing reflection (5 min)

‘Unless the Lord builds the house,
Those who build it labour in vain.’ (Psalm 127:1)

The Lord loves the people in our families and parishes, even more than we do. We can be sure that God wants them to experience the joy of love. The Holy Spirit is already at work, preparing the way. We are invited to join in God’s work, knowing that the Spirit will give us whatever we need to do what God is asking of us. We take a moment to become aware of the Spirit of hope at work in our own hearts. For what are we grateful? For what do we hope?

We ask the Lord for whatever we need. [*Participants can speak aloud one-sentence prayers of thanks or request.*] **Lord hear us.**

‘Now to him who by the power that is working within us is able to do far beyond all that we ask or think, to him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever, Amen.’ (Ephesians 3:20–21)

‘Those who go out weeping, carrying seed to sow
Will return with songs of joy, bringing their harvested sheaves.’ (Psalm 126:6)



SPRING TRAINING SESSION

- Welcome and prayer (5 min)
- Review of our experience with *Let's Talk Family! Let's Be Family!* (20 min)
- Overview of *The Joy of Love* (40 min)
- Facilitation skills for *Let's Talk Family! Let's Be Family!* (80 min)
- Closing Reflection (5 min)

Review of Experience (20 min)



Small group discussion followed by open forum:

- What did we do in our parishes since the autumn?
- What went well?
- What was difficult?
- What have we learned?

Overview of *The Joy of Love* (40 min)



Input (15 min) Note: You may wish to break this input into two parts with a moment in between for quiet

We look here at three documents that Pope Francis has written:

- *The Joy of the Gospel* (Our mission as a Church)
- *Praise Be* (Care for the earth)
- *The Joy of Love* (Care for families)



Pope Francis offers his vision in the light of Church tradition, reading that tradition in light of present day realities. His understanding is that God's Spirit continues to speak to us in the midst of current events, and that this speaking of the Spirit deepens our understanding of the core message of our faith handed down through the ages. There is a common pattern throughout the three documents.

A. Have faith in the God of love

The God of love revealed to us by Jesus is with us and is building up a society of love. That God of love is a God of tenderness and mercy who sees our fragility, but does not condemn us.

B. People are more important than things

While there are signs of God's work bearing fruit in so many good things in the world, there are also many things that contradict God's love. Pope Francis speaks of the obsession with material things that turns people's hearts away from their own inner world and the dignity of every human being. He sees this at the root of how we have developed an unjust global economy. We ravage our planet for raw materials. People become less important than things. Things don't have an interior life. If we become obsessed with them we lose confidence in our own inner life where we experience God. And we lose respect for what makes people different to things. In *The Joy of the Gospel* he shows how this mindset has created huge inequality and injustice in our world and to our world, with masses of people excluded from the opportunity to live dignified human lives. In *Praise Be* he shows how this has come to the point where our very planet is being seriously damaged. And in *The Joy of Love* he shows how the same mindset that causes global inequality and environmental destruction is also destructive to relationships at a personal and family level.

C. Our mission is love

The third point that runs through the three documents is about our mission as a community who has faith in the God of love. We are called to share the Good News about God's love and to cooperate with God in challenging the mindset that puts things before people. Pope Francis constantly calls us to go out to the peripheries of our world. Our message of God's love is relevant and urgent for the needs of our world today. Pope Francis asks us to carry out our mission with a spirit of mercy. Our task is not to condemn the world but to build it up as a civilisation of love.

In *The Joy of Love* we see these basic themes examined in relation to the family.



1. Love, fragility and tenderness

The Joy of Love explores these three key themes: God's call on us to respond to his love; God's compassion at our fragility; and God's tenderness in response to that fragility. Pope Francis offers a vision for marriage and family which he believes is realistically attainable and at the same time calls for compassion and a reaching out to those who for any reason cannot achieve that vision.

2. God's love

The desire to marry and form a family remains vibrant, especially among young people. Our Christian vision of family supports that desire. A key question for Pope Francis is how we communicate our vision. How do we help young people especially to understand that the joy of love is not only a real possibility for them, but something that God wills and supports them towards? His starting point as always is God's love. This love calls us and supports us in creating a society of love, with the family as its foundation, where the couple and their children can grow towards full, joyful human living.

3. Catholic vision for marriage

In this faith context of a God of love, the challenge of self-giving makes sense. Pope Francis reminds us that in voluntary self-giving we touch on the true nature of God and our true nature as persons. This giving of self in love means lifelong exclusive commitment to one another and openness to new life. This is the best framework within which we can grow in the fullness of joy and love.

4. Our throwaway culture

In today's society, Pope Francis says that the 'ideal' of marriage, marked by a commitment to exclusivity and stability, 'is swept aside whenever it proves inconvenient or tiresome'. This is what he calls 'our throwaway culture'. In contrast, the Church needs to hold before society the value of marriage and also warn against 'a cultural decline' that often treats relationships and people as it treats objects – that is, as disposable.



5. The detailed practice of love

Pope Francis outlines what tender love looks like for the couple and for their children in very practical terms. He uses St Paul's first letter to the Corinthians as a guide for married love ('Love is patient, love is kind ...'). Pope Francis speaks of the importance of welcoming and honouring children as human beings of immense worth. He says that parents and the wider family all have roles here. He highlights the key role of the family in the education and formation of children for their whole lives.

6. Growth in time

Pope Francis reminds us that 'no family drops down from heaven perfectly formed'; families need constantly to grow and mature in the ability to love. The Bible itself shows the gradual way we grow towards the ideal. The sacrament of marriage, according to the Pope, 'is not a social convention, an empty ritual or merely the outward sign of a commitment'. The sacrament itself is a gift to us, a means by which God supports us as we grow throughout our whole lives towards the ideal of married love. The Church, as the 'family of families', is challenged to deepen its support for married couples, during marriage preparation and throughout their married life. While always promoting the ideal of family life, this also means recognising goodness and grace wherever we find it, including in less than perfect family situations.

7. No one is outside God's mercy

While Pope Francis is clear that as Church we need to offer the full vision of love, marriage and family, we must also present the full truth of God's mercy. No one is outside of God's mercy, no matter what their situation.

8. Truth and tenderness

In our response to people who find themselves in situations that do not yet or no longer correspond to the Church's teaching on marriage and who want to take part in the life of the Church, Pope Francis makes a number of points:

- No one is without sin



- The goal of evangelisation is to foster a deep personal relationship with the God of love, not merely conformity to rules, and on the basis of that relationship, love of our neighbour.
- Each of us can make a step, big or small, towards our relationship with God, and none but God can judge its sincerity and significance.
- Conscience is the most secret core and sanctuary of a person. Here each person is alone with God, whose voice echoes in the depths of our heart. Our conscience has a defining role to play in how we decide what is right for us to do. Conscience is not about doing what we like. It involves bringing objective and sometimes difficult questions into our encounter with God. It is a conversation on these questions before God and with God, a conversation which always includes giving full consideration to the teaching of the Church, to the impact of my decisions on others, and so on.
- We need to help people discern what they should do and then to accompany them with the tenderness of Jesus as they take personal responsibility for their decisions and actions.

9. Spiritual realism

As human beings we have the need to be loved infinitely. It is a need that only God can satisfy. There is always a danger that we will make demands of other people that are unfair and even impossible for them to meet. In a family situation this means there are limits to what we can expect of one another. We need to be realistic. Pope Francis reminds us as he concludes *The Joy of Love* that 'no one but God can presume to take over the deepest and most personal core of the loved one; he alone can be the ultimate centre of our lives'. This is a very important insight. Understanding it and letting it underpin our relationships could be the saving of them.



**Guide to reflection (5 min)**

Pope Francis is holding two points together that are in some tension. He is clear that we need to offer and promote the full vision of Christian love and marriage. He is equally clear that we need to bring God's mercy and compassion to situations where this full vision is not realised. We need to recognise that God is present and working in the midst of human fragility, and there is not always a simple way of judging what situation is pleasing to God and what is not. He challenges two opposite ways of dealing with this tension. On the one hand, a 'rules and regulations' approach that says there are clear answers that can be applied to every situation. On the other hand, an 'anything goes' approach that says every situation is okay, and we have no business offering our vision. Where am I on this? Do I tend towards a rules approach or an anything goes approach?

Small group discussion and open forum (20 min)

How did I respond to the question in the reflection? Is there anything else that strikes me about *The Joy of Love*?



Facilitating *The Joy of Love: Six-Session Parish Conversation*



The purpose here is to give people an opportunity to practise facilitation using some of the video material from session one of *The Joy of Love: Six-Session Parish Conversation*.

Input on Facilitation (10 min)

There are two things to be aware of when facilitating a group – the *soul* of the meeting and the *structure* of the meeting.



Soul

- How we help a person feel welcome, included and respected
- This needs to be included in the overall planning of an activity, and also in small or large groups

What does this mean in practice?

When planning for the session put ‘welcome’ and ‘hospitality’ on your agenda:

- Start by making sure each person at the planning meeting is made to feel welcome and included!
- What can we do to make the venue for our activity warm and welcoming?
- What hospitality can we offer at the beginning or end?
- Who is responsible for personally welcoming each person that turns up?

In the small group discussion:

- Invite each person to introduce themselves
- Keep an eye on who is speaking and make sure each person has the opportunity to contribute
- If somebody breaks a ground rule don’t ignore it – gently but firmly intervene
- Thank people at the end of each session



Structure

- The purpose of the session and the steps laid out to achieve that purpose
- The facilitator needs to know what the purpose is, what the steps are, and where the group is on those steps at any time

What does this mean in practice?

- The purpose of the small group work is to provide an opportunity for a respectful conversation about the material viewed
- You are not there to defend or explain the material – but simply to invite people to respond to it
- In the *The Joy of Love: Six-Session Parish Conversation* programme the structure is already laid out in regard to the questions for discussion and the time available
- The key task of the facilitator is to be aware of time (without constantly looking at their watch!) so that everybody has space to contribute
- You don't have to cover all the questions – but make sure people stay on topic



Practise with session one of *Let's Talk Family: The Reality of Family Life Today*

1. Show the first video clip (vox pop) (5 min)
2. Hold small group discussions with the questions from session one (10 min)
3. Review the experience. How was it in regard to *soul* – the welcome, the inclusion, the respect? How did we manage the *structure* – doing the task, keeping to time? What have we learned? (15 min)
4. Show a section from the second video clip – an input on *The Joy of Love* (5 min)
5. Again hold small group discussions as indicated in the programme (10 min)
6. Again review the experience. What have we learned about facilitation? What questions do we have about running a *Joy of Love* programme in our parish? (30 min)



Guide for closing reflection (5 min)

‘Unless the Lord builds the house,
Those who build it labour in vain.’ (*Psalms 127:1*)

The Lord loves the people in our families and parishes, even more than we do. We can be sure that God wants them to experience the joy of love. The Holy Spirit is already at work, preparing the way. We are invited to join in God’s work, knowing that the Spirit will give us whatever we need to do what God is asking of us. We take a moment to become aware of the Spirit of hope at work in our own hearts. For what are we grateful? What do we hope for?

We ask the Lord for whatever we need. [*Participants can speak aloud one-sentence prayers of thanks or request.*] **Lord hear us.**

‘Now to him who by the power that is working within us is able to do far beyond all that we ask or think, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever, Amen.’ (*Ephesians 3:20–21*)

‘Those who go out weeping, carrying seed to sow
Will return with songs of joy, bringing their harvested sheaves.’ (*Psalms 126:6*)



